

EDITORIAL

CURRENT EVENTS: THE DRIFT OF THINGS AS WE SEE IT.

The battle is over, and Theodore Roosevelt has won one of the most notable victories in the history of American politics. The latest returns indicate that seven of Maryland's eight electoral votes will go for Parker, thus making the total vote 140 for Parker and 336 for Roosevelt, instead of 133 to 343 as first announced; but this still leaves the New York judge the worst defeated candidate since Horace Greely. And Roosevelt's plurality in the popular vote completely overshadows all previous triumphs of this character.

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A Criticism of Three Parties.

About six weeks ago the Editor of The Progressive Farmer and Cotton Plant, wrote the following criticism of the three leading political parties, and this criticism, which has not yet appeared in this paper, seems to us to be worth re-reading in the light of the election returns. We wrote:

"In the course of some complimentary allusions to itself a few weeks ago, an esteemed North Carolina contemporary—we'll call it the Kicker—remarked: 'Modesty forbids us to say that the Kicker is the best paper in the county.' Similarly, expediency forbids us to say that if we were called upon to act as critic for the three parties prominent in this National campaign, we should speak about as follows: The Republican Party is too subservient to the great protected interests of the country; President Roosevelt less inclined to stand up against them than two years ago; and the party leaders grievously wrong in their attitude toward the negro and the South. On the other hand, the Democratic National leaders this year have shown a decided disposition to ape the Republican Party in order to get popularity; by omission of the income tax plank and in other ways they have made a humiliating appeal for the help of the money power; and the party is without a well-defined and positive policy. As for the Populist leaders, they include a number of sincere and honorable men; but they are being used as cats' paws by the Republicans in some sections; and the party has too many impractical ideas to be safe.

"So much for the more disagreeable features of the several parties. Looking on the other side, for the Republican Party it should be said that it knows its own mind and that its candidate, aside from his deplorable misconception of the negro, is probably the worthiest it has presented since the Civil War. For the Democratic Party it should be said that it stands for a return to stricter constitutional standards, and that its success means an end to the scheme to reduce the South's influence in National affairs. For the Populist Party, it should be said that its leader is one of the ablest and cleanest men in American politics, and that if moderate Bryanism fail in the Democratic Party, more radical Populism will flourish as a distinct party.

"These are the things, as we said in the outset, which we should say, did not expediency forbid. Were we to say them in spite of expediency, we should request that in quoting them you give our verdict as to your own party as well as the other fellow's party."

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Why the Democrats Were Beaten.

This criticism of the Democratic, Republican and Populist leaders still seems to us to be just; and in the declaration that "the Democratic leaders this year have shown a disposition to ape the Republican Party, hoping thereby to win popularity," the real secret of last Tuesday's Democratic rout was pointed out. The platform adopted at St. Louis was a tolerably vigorous document, but Judge Parker's acceptance knocked

most of the snap out of it. The trusts he said needed little further attention from Congress or the President, the common law being sufficient to deal with them. The tariff he said ought to be revised gradually, but it would be four years before anything could be done. About constitutionalism and the Philippines, he declared himself more positively; but people not versed in legal lore refused to get excited about the Constitution, and the Philippine question was old 1900 straw threshed over. In short, Judge Parker failed to show in his early addresses just where he promised any vitally different political program from that of Mr. Roosevelt. Mr. Dooley did not very seriously misrepresent the New York judge in reporting his uncertain views as follows:

"I am," says he, "irrevocably for a good standard but would send best regards to Willum Jennings Bryan," he says. "I denounce the tariff as a crool an' un-American nicissity," he says. "I abominate the trusts. Oh, if I had wan here now. I wudden't do a thing to it. But there ar're good trusts an' bad trusts. I wud not desthroy them. What good wud that do? I wud coax them," he says. "I wud tache them to ate out iv th' hand. If they et th' hand that wud be their mistake," he says. "As for me views on th' Ph'ilippeens," he says, "they ar're very decided. I wud get out iv that onhappy spot at wanst, nex' year, some time. I wud lave them onhappy people to bask in their own wrechedness," he says, "as soon as they ar're in condition to be free which may be niver," he says. "As for th' rest iv me views," he says, "what d'ye want?"

The American people like a man or party of positive and decided views. Bryan has become the political idol of hundreds of thousands because he believes a thing with his whole soul and doesn't mince words in expressing himself. Cleveland came within sight of breaking all precedent and winning a nomination for a third term simply because his backbone is as big as a telegraph pole, and he lets people know exactly where he stands. Judge Parker was too tame. "He seems to be running for Chief Justice," said Harper's Weekly, "while Roosevelt is running for President." Whatever the President's faults, evasion and indefiniteness in statement were not among them. The people chose the positive man and they choose the positive party.

Here in the South, of course, the situation was different. The negro question was an issue in the campaign, and to the Southern people there was a vital difference between the candidates. To the average Northern voter, however, the Democratic Party this year seemed to be a sort of imitation Republican Party; and he chose the genuine article instead of the imitation.

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Mr. Bryan's Program for the Party.

Not without reason therefore is the declaration of George Fred Williams, of Massachusetts: "The experiment of making a second-hand Republican Party out of the Democratic organization will never be repeated." Already Mr. Bryan is out in a call to his followers to organize for 1908. Last Tuesday's result, he says, "was due to the fact that the Democratic Party attempted to be conservative in the presence of conditions which demand radical remedies. It sounded a partial retreat, when it should have ordered a charge all along the line."

In conclusion, Mr. Bryan's Commoner sums up the reforms he would have his party advocate in "The Democratic Party must make its attack this fashion:

upon the trusts so vehement that no one will suspect secret aid from them. It will be to its advantage if it will begin the next campaign with an announcement that no trust contributions will be accepted, and then prove its sincerity by giving the public access to its contribution list.

"The party must continue its defense of the

interests of the wage earners; it must protect them from the encroachments of capital.

"The party must continue its opposition to national banks of issue and must insist upon divorcing the Treasury Department from Wall Street.

"The party must continue its fight for the popular election of Senators and for direct legislation wherever the principle can be applied. It must not only maintain its position on old issues, but it must advance to the consideration of new questions as they arise.

"It takes time to direct attention to an evil and still more time to consolidate sentiment in favor of a remedy, and Mr. Bryan is not sanguine enough to believe that all the reforms that he favors will at once be indorsed by any party platform, but he will proceed to point out the reforms which he believes to be needed. Among these may be mentioned the postal telegraph system, State ownership of railroads, the election of Federal Judges for fixed terms, and the election of postmasters by the people for their respective communities. Instead of having the government controlled by corporations through officers chosen by the corporations, we must have a government of the people, by the people, and for the people."

Mr. Bryan's program will probably not be adopted in its entirety, but the defeat of Judge Parker has convinced even the practical politicians that it is better to stand for something and be beaten decently, than be wiped off the earth while trying to please everybody—and succeeding with nobody.

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Judge Parker's Views.

The defeated candidate, Judge Parker, has also issued an address to the people which seems to indicate that he has not retired from politics. In fact, a strenuous battle for leadership between him and Mr. Bryan is now predicted by many. The most significant paragraph of the address is the following:

"In the presence of a defeat that would take away all personal ambition, were it true that otherwise it possessed me, I do not hesitate to say that in my opinion the greatest moral question which now confronts us is: Shall the trusts and corporations be prevented from contributing money to control or to aid in controlling elections?"

Judge Parker might have won many votes by bringing this issue to the front early in the campaign; while by waiting till the end was almost at hand, he made it easy for the Republican voter to say that the Democratic managers did not oppose the acceptance of trust money until it became apparent that they could get none.

Mr. Parker also declares that "before long the people will realize that the tariff-fed trusts and illegal combinations are absorbing the wealth of the nation," and his remarks indicate that he now looks for a more positive remedy than the mere application of the common law.

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Miscellaneous Election Notes.

What we have said in preceding paragraphs about the American people liking a man of independence and positive convictions is borne out not only by the election of Mr. Roosevelt, but by the Gubernatorial elections in Mississippi and Missouri. The Republicans carried Missouri by 15,000 majority for the Presidential electors, but Joseph W. Folk, the Democratic candidate for Governor, led his ticket by 25,000 voters and goes in with 35,000 majority over his opponent. Over in Wisconsin, La Follette who has stood squarely against corporation influence and machine rule, won a splendid victory in spite of the bolting ticket against him, and may go to the United States Senate, if he will. Our readers will recall that we have too recently paid tributes to these men—to Folk who rooted out the grafters in St. Louis politics and prosecuted Democratic and Republican thieves with equal vigor, and to La